

6 Conclusion

The theoretical part of this study has traced the emergence of the **HCF City concept** and investigated the assessment of candidate cities as well as relevant regulations concerning conservation measures, funding and usage. Initially, the HCF City was put forward as a form of designation by promoters of China's participation in international conservation. While the selection of a first batch of cities was based on general acknowledgement, there has since developed a comprehensive system with fixed assessment criteria, a legal framework, and a set of planning, as well as conservation regulations and guidelines. One important conceptual understanding in this process was the difference between an overall HCF City and individual officially protected entities (*wenwu baohu danwei* 文物保护单位). As a result, the HCF City was narrowed down to smaller protection units, such as the historic and cultural block and HCF Streets.

The cities where the case studies investigated in the empirical part are located constitute of early examples of listed cities which have gradually been integrated into the HCF City framework. One important means to achieve this integration is the conservation plan. In all three cases, the conservation plans were drafted according to the HCF City's three conceptual tiers: the **city/town**, the **historic and cultural block** and **officially protected entities**. Incentives for local governments to list individual sites as officially protected entities are set by the assessment system. After successful listing, these sites further underlie the Cultural Relics Protection Law. In contrast to an earlier limited focus on individual officially protected entities, conservation of HCF Cities considers the close relationship of urban centers to their surrounding environment and of individual sites to their urban context.

The analysis of the conservation assessment standard for National HCF Cities revealed an increasing importance of intangible heritage and vernacular architecture (chapter 2.3). In the quantitative assessment of HCF Cities, not only the amount of preserved cultural relics is considered (one third), but also accumulations of historical buildings (one third) as well as conservation and management measures (one third). Although intangible heritage is included as an evaluation criterion, the overall quantitative assessment remains largely concentrated on material remains. Formerly neglected historical buildings are now considered on the second tier: historic and cultural blocks. Significant elements for historic and

Conclusion

cultural blocks as found in the standard are **historic streets, historical buildings and historical environmental elements**. While the preservation of characteristics such as spatial structure and setting were still rejected at the time of the Liang-Chen Proposal, these are now considered significant parts of an HCF City with its protection and control areas.

Moreover, incentives are set to refrain from large-scale relocation of residents. In the indicator system for assessment of National HCF Towns/Villages, these are introduced through a criterion which measures the share of original residents in the core protection area. In reaction to global trends, the maintenance of a residential area's original function gains increasing importance for its overall authenticity. Relocation was kept low in the Pingjiang Historic Block and Tongli whereby people moved out due to economic reasons in Tianzifang; to sublease their housing units to shop owners. In Tianzifang, the maintenance of its residential function is one of the main reasons why it is perceived more authentically than related projects in Shanghai such as Xintiandi.

Cultural Significance of the HCF City/Town and Historic and Cultural Blocks

On the first and second conceptual tiers of the HCF City/Town and the historic and cultural blocks, all three cases derive cultural significance from their **spatial structure** and **historic townscape** as defined in the Planning Regulations and included in the assessment standards. While the Pingjiang Historic Block is part of a planned ancient capital city, the spatial structure of Tongli has been determined by its natural setting and division into *wei*-islands. As a mixed-use block, former industrial and residential spaces are arranged on a network of smaller and wider lanes in Tianzifang, enclosed by streets which integrate the block into the greater city. Thereby, all three cases share characteristics such as spatial hierarchy and a close relation to their environment.

Equally, the investigated areas gain significance from environmental elements and historical buildings which generate their historic townscape. **Environmental elements** are most splendid in the Pingjiang Historic Block and comprise parts of the city moat, city wall and memorial archways. Other elements which also appear in the other two cases are stone bridges, historic trees and wells. Due to its high grade of urbanization, Tianzifang has the least number of environmental elements. However, important functions of such elements have also been carried on in Tianzifang as exemplified by the archways. Originating from the residential wards of capital cities, archways have later become freestanding structures in honor of a

person's or family's commendable deeds. The names on these wards had an identity building function which was carried on, for example, in the case of Da and Xiao Liuzhi Lane of the Pingjiang Historic Block whose names derive from such an archway (see chapter 3.1.1).

In *lilong* neighborhoods, this function persists with entrance gates which equally carry a compound name. Because the basic structure and appearance of *lilong* houses in a compound is identical, compound names have a stronger identity building function than their individual housing units. The importance of compound names for the identity of a place becomes even clearer in the case of Tianzifang where it aimed at claiming the block as an artistic space. While the “Shanghai Gate of Art” by Chen Yifei was established as a material symbol for this function, the creation of the name “Tianzifang” takes up this connotation and additionally provides a relation to traditional culture.

As part of the historic townscape, **historical buildings** are significant representations of regional culture. In all three cases, they share basic design principles such as orientation, axiality and symmetry. Moreover, architectural structures are composed as *ensembles* whose individual buildings are strongly interrelated. They further illustrate the lifestyle and social practices of their historical periods such as social hierarchy and “graduated privacy”. Another shared characteristic of historical buildings in all three cases is their strong consideration of environmental impacts as reflected in architectural elements such as skywells, the elevation of courtyard-building compounds located at the rear, as well as lattice windows and doors.

This study has further found that all significant elements of historic and cultural blocks are closely related to **intangible heritage**. Such intangible aspects comprise connotations to local history and culture, literature, philosophical concepts and relations to the environment. Primarily, names can function as carriers of intangible heritage. Such names comprise block names, lane names, hall names as well as names of individual structures such as bridges. In the case of street names in the Pingjiang Historic Block, for example, they can refer to historical figures or carry literary connotations. While hall names derive from a great variety of sources, they often include Confucian virtues, auspicious meanings, aspirations or references to the environment. Moreover, names can be related to local legends, such as in the case of *Futu* in Tongli or Hu Xiangshi Lane in the Pingjiang Historic Block.

Such connotations are further embodied in ornamental and pictorial carvings. As shown in the case studies, these carvings are not limited to buildings but equally appear on other built structures such as bridges or environmental elements (e.g. archways and wells). They often derive from folk belief and show popular auspicious meanings such as the crane which symbolizes longevity. These layers of intangible

Conclusion

heritage are equally important for the authenticity of residential areas. The conservation plan of the Pingjiang Historic Block has considered this layer and recommends maintaining historic street names as aspects of intangible heritage.

Cultural Significance of Officially Protected Entities

On the third conceptual tier, officially protected entities have been defined in the China Principles as significant for their historical, artistic, scientific, cultural and social values. While all architectural structures have **historical value** as representations of the material production, lifestyle and traditions of their respective historical periods, officially protected entities are often related to historical figures. The Pingjiang Historic Block features a great number of former residences of figures such as Gu Jiegang or Hong Jun and Huiyin Garden, for example, is equally related to Li Hongzhang and Cheng Xueqi. In Tongli, there are officially protected entities connected to the Southern Society including the Former Residence of Chen Qubing and Nanyuan Teahouse. Other examples are Tianfang and Red Building which are related to Jin Songcen.

Almost all officially protected entities and controlled and protected buildings in the Pingjiang Historic Block have been recorded in historical records (see appendix A.9 and A.10). Due to China's long historiographic tradition, these sources provide information on which sites have been considered significant at the time of their compilation and further enhance their historical value. In the case of Tongli, this criterion is equally significant. As shown in the analysis of historical value illustrated in appendix A.11 which contains sites listed in the *Jiaqing Gazetteer*, almost all sites before the Republican period have been included and most of the sites not included were only built after the compilation of the *Jiaqing Gazetteer*. Missing entities have further been included in the later *Tongli Town Gazetteer* from 2016.

The historical value of officially protected entities can further derive from unique elements such as the opera stage in the Quan-Jin Guild Hall or sets of wooden carvings in Chongben and Jiayin Halls. Only a few entities are related to important events, because most structures are residential buildings. However, due to their relation to historical figures, some entities also have social value as they are places for commemoration. Lize Girls' School in Tongli, for example, has commemorative value related to the protests against the 21 Demands.

The analysis of cultural significance has shown that sites in Suzhou and Tongli have high **artistic value** associated with their gardens or garden related elements. Sites where a garden or parts of it have been preserved are listed on the highest

protection levels. This derives from their cultural meaning and close relation to Chinese painting techniques. Artistic value is further gained from architectural elements and ornamentation. In comparison to historical buildings, officially protected entities often feature rare elements such as landscape architecture, *yuanyang* or *shamao* halls, inscribed archways and fine carvings. Some sites also have immovable artistic works such as the lakeside rocks in the Couple's Garden Retreat and Tuisi Garden.

In terms of **scientific value**, officially protected entities in the Pingjiang Historic Block mostly follow a north-south orientation while entities in Tongli can also have east-west or west-east orientations depending on the setting. Entities with high scientific value are laid out in specific forms such as the Couple's Garden Retreat which follows *yin* and *yang* principles or Wuben Hall in the shape of a crane lying prone. Moreover, they show rare construction techniques such as wooden column bases used in the Ming dynasty or materials such as imported bricks for Republican buildings.

Finally, officially protected entities have **cultural value**. Great mansions not only have hall names but also names for individual buildings in their residential part as well as adjacent garden. In comparison to historical buildings, the hall and building names of listed entities are often related to Chinese classics or literary works as well as the official ranks and honorable deeds of ancestors or mansion owners. In addition to these names which appear in the form of inscriptions on archways or horizontal wooden boards, decorative carvings show popular literary scenes such as in the cases of Chongben Hall and Jiayin Hall in Tongli which feature sets from the *Dream of the Red Chamber* or the *Story of the Western Wing*. Ornamental and pictorial patterns can further derive from Buddhist and Taoist tradition such as the "Eight Immortals" as well as popular motives from folk belief.

The analysis of cultural significance in the three case studies has shown that in addition to material remains, the significance of cultural heritage derives from a close connection of built structures to their environment and a close relation to culture as expressed in connotations. Decoration and ornamentation on their carriers differ among social strata, ranging from auspicious symbols and folk belief to classical literature and philosophy. The evaluation of individual sites according to criteria defined in the China Principles has shown that heritage related to classical culture is valued the highest; a bias which has already been revealed in the *Critical Heritage Studies* context. While the Principles therefore enable the protection of outstanding structures, more common historical buildings need to be included in local conservation plans on a regional and municipal level.

Conservation Measures and Management

On a national level, conservation regulations and guidelines such as the Chinese Cultural Relics Protection Law and the China Principles have been formulated in close relation to the Venice Charter (see chapter 2.4). Consequently, architectural conservation interventions such as reconstruction, rebuilding and relocation of sites are prohibited except for cases of “special circumstances”. Such “special circumstances” refer to natural threats or development projects of national importance.

While, on a national level, these regulations and guidelines oppose reconstruction, rebuilding and relocation, the case studies have shown that these interventions had been carried out on the local level in the Pingjiang Historic Block before these regulations were issued as well as afterwards. In the early examples of the Couple’s Garden Retreat and the Quan-Jin Guild Hall, their main halls have been reconstructed. As already mentioned, these halls are a decisive part of the building complex with other buildings being arranged according to this hall. Petzet has noted that reconstruction may be justified within historic complexes and *ensembles* which would be reduced or impaired by a “gap” (see chapter 2.4).¹ Due to the close interrelatedness of structures in Chinese architecture, the missing main halls were not only a loss of material fabric but also a loss in terms of form and design. In the conservation process, the maintenance of this intangible aspect was preferred to authenticity in material and substance.

Another example where intervention was justified by intangible aspects is the relocation of the well in the western garden of the Couple’s Garden Retreat. Here, both gardens are designed according to the cosmological binary principles of *yin* and *yang* with a pond in the eastern garden which corresponds to the well in the western garden. The well therefore derives its credibility not primarily from its material or substantial attributes but its philosophical meaning as the counterpart to the pond.

The relocation of Ding Mansion could further be justified by the fact that its historical environment had already been altered and it was difficult to preserve the buildings *in situ* due to the adjacent multi-story buildings of Changfa Mall. As has been mentioned in chapter 2.4, the China Principles allow relocation if “historic remains have become isolated and have lost their historic context”.² Still, tourism

1 Petzet, Michael (2013): “Conservation of Monuments and Sites — International Principles in Theory and Practice”, “Denkmalpflege — Internationale Grundsätze in Theorie und Praxis”, p. 80.

2 China ICOMOS (Chinese-language document); Agnew, Neville; Demas, Martha (English-language translation ed., 2004): *Zhongguo wenwu guji baohu zhunze* 中国文物古迹保护准则, *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*, p. 85.

development objectives played a decisive role for the above-mentioned interventions and must be taken into account. While the Couple's Garden Retreat and the Quan-Jin Guild Hall were opened for tourism purposes, Ding Mansion was moved to the site of the former Pingjiang Road Farm Produce Market to improve the block's townscape.

In the case of Tongli, several sites on higher listing levels have been "enhanced" with cultural content as well as physical structures in order to expand the visiting area. In Tuisi Garden, a former granary was transformed into a *guihua* parlor in order to complete views of the Four Seasons which is a popular theme in Chinese landscape painting. Following the same objective to open the site as a tourist destination, additional structures of landscape architecture have been constructed in the garden of Gengle Hall. Although most interventions can be justified by conservation purposes, tourism development provided the main impetus.

The most extensive rebuilding has been done at the Pearl Pagoda Site. While only little material heritage has been preserved of the former Chen Family Mansion, the site was enriched with intangible heritage and the legend of the Pearl Pagoda thereby claimed as local heritage. In addition to its strong focus on tourism development, Tongli has to compete with a number of other water towns in the region which have a similar historic townscape. In addition to different branding activities, the "enrichment" with cultural content is one means to stand out from other locations.

Another shared characteristic for the promotion of local heritage found in all three urban cases is the definition of landscape scene sets, following the tradition to compile "eight views" sets of outstanding landscape scenes which originated from literati culture. While Tongli has historically defined sets, only four of these scenes have been preserved which may be a reason why they are not extensively promoted. In the case of Tianzifang there have been several sets defined with cultural and partially poetic sight names in the development plans in order to promote its non-exceptional built heritage. However, these sight names have not (yet) been used in practice.

The Pingjiang Historic Block is the only case where the sight names have been practically used. Primarily, a group of local volunteers drafted a brochure on eight of the "Twelve Views of Pingjiang" to introduce the places to tourists. Recently, the Pingjiang Historic Block Company also launched initiatives to make them better known by local people as well as tourists. The example shows that the designation of sight names for a selection of representative places acknowledged for their historical and cultural significance constitutes an important aspect for the formation of local heritage. The city of Hangzhou is another example where public assessment meetings have been initiated to define new scenic spots. The city has

Conclusion

defined a new set of the “Ten Views of the West Lake” (Xihu shi jing 西湖十景) named the “New Ten Views of the West Lake” (Xin Xihu shi jing 新西湖十景) in the 1980s and a “Third Review of the Ten West Lake Views” (Sanping Xihu shi jing 三评西湖十景) in 2007.³

Forms of Use

In the Planning Regulations of 2005, the conservation measure determined for immovable cultural relics is *xiushan*, a broad term which can range from maintenance to major restoration. The case studies have shown that officially protected entities on higher listing levels are usually restored with the objective to open them up for tourism or as museums. This form of use is determined in the Cultural Relics Protection Law. The China Principles further state that public access to the site should be provided and that officially protected entities should be used in a rational manner (see chapter 2.4). At the Pingjiang Historic Block this has been considered and museums are accessible without entrance tickets. In contrast, Tongli requires a comprehensive ticket not only to access its sites but the historic town as such. However, five to seven percent of the yearly income generated from tourism are reinvested for the preservation of the historic town.

In the HCF City concept, historical buildings are valued for their outward appearance which generate the historic townscape. The Planning Regulations therefore define that their interiors may be improved and adapted for modern usage. Their new functions are similar in all three case studies and they may be opened as guesthouses, restaurants or shops. In contrast to officially protected entities where the government usually has the property rights, residents holding the right of use for historical buildings primarily draw on their building as economic resource. In Tianzifang as well as in the other two cases, these buildings are the main resource for residents to participate in local development.

While all three cases are former residential areas, their revitalization included a **diversification of functions**. Thereby, built heritage sites in the Pingjiang Historic Block take on the greatest variety of functions. Museums are not only opened for tourism but provide spaces for *kunqu* and *pingtan* practices by the local community or are used for school opening ceremonies as in the case of the Zhuangyuan Museum. Another example where a controlled and protected building is used for social purposes is the elderly home in Weidao Guan Qian No. 27.

3 Zhang, Xianliang 张先亮; Wang, Min 王敏 (2014): “Shilun ‘Xihu shi jing’ de ming-ming yishu” 试论“西湖十景”的命名艺术 [Some viewpoints on the art of naming in the “Ten Views of the West Lake”], p. 191.

In Tongli, the historic town is planned to carry on its residential function which shall be integrated with touristic use. While living conditions have been improved for local residents, buildings treated by the government are exclusively used for touristic purposes. Although tourism development provides employment for younger people, they usually move to new houses in the residential districts outside of the historic town where life is more convenient.

Tianzifang equally developed from a mixed-use block with residential and industrial units to further become a creative and cultural industry park as well as a tourist destination. While commercial and touristic use dominate in the block, its function as an artistic space has been limited to certain areas. Moreover, its residential and cultural functions are much less pronounced. While the block originally had 671 households, only 60 households remained by 2016.⁴ The use of historical buildings for exhibition or educational purposes is mainly limited to the former workshop of Chen Yifei, the Liuli Museum on Taikang Road and Tianzifang Art Center.

Major case study results concerning the conservation approach, cultural significance, conservation measures and usage are illustrated below:

Table 6-1. Case Study Results.

| | Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block 平江历史街区 | Tongli Ancient Water Town 同里水乡古镇 | Shanghai Tianzifang 上海田子坊 |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <i>initiator</i> | top-down: initiated by local government | top-down: initiated by local government + international cooperation | bottom-up: initiated by Tianzifang advocates with support of conservationists, artists, shopowners |
| <i>conservation approach</i> | conservation project with focus on Pingjiang Road (2002); several pilot projects for the conservation of individual sites | integrated development of residential function and tourism; pilot project for HUL management approach | transformation of former industrial buildings and lilong housing into art studios, shops and restaurants |

4 Interview with the resident mediator, Tianzifang, June 14, 2016.

Conclusion

| | Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block 平江历史街区 | Tongli Ancient Water Town 同里水乡古镇 | Shanghai Tianzifang 上海田子坊 |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>cultural significance</i> | planned ancient capital city; rich in environmental elements; great number of officially protected entities and con- trolled and protected buildings; historical buildings; intangible heritage | spatial structure de- termined by natural setting and division into <i>wei</i> -islands; environmental elements; officially protected and controlled entities; historical buildings; intangible heritage | network of smaller and wider lanes; few environmental elements; historical buildings; intangible heritage; residential function |
| <i>conservation measures</i> | officially protec- ted entities mostly restored; cases of reconstruc- tion, rebuilding and relocation justified by intangible aspects; maintenance and adaptive reuse of historical buildings; improvement of basic infrastructure and environment | officially protected entities mostly restored; in some cases con- struction of addi- tional structures and rebuilding for touristic purposes; several sites “enhanced” with cultural content; maintenance and adaptive reuse of historical buildings; improvement of basic infrastructure and environment | mostly maintenance measures of <i>lilong</i> , as well as factory, buildings and adaptive reuse; improvement of basic infrastructure and environment |
| <i>forms of use</i> | restored officially pro- tected entities opened as tourism or museum spaces and for com- munity activities; museums accessible without entrance tickets; | restored officially protected entities mainly opened as tourist destinations; comprehensive ticket required; | creative and cultural industry park; tourist destination; commercial space; artistic space; limited exhibition spaces |

| | Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block 平江历史街区 | Tongli Ancient Water Town 同里水乡古镇 | Shanghai Tianzifang 上海田子坊 |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>forms of use</i> | historical buildings opened as guest- houses, restaurants or shops | historical buildings opened as guest- houses, restaurants or shops | |
| <i>residential function</i> | maintained, mostly in historical buildings | maintained, mostly in historical buildings | maintained, mainly in units on the 2 nd and 3 rd stories |

Source: author's draft.

Historic Urban Landscape Management Approach

The third and encapsulating question of this study concerned the applicability of UNESCO's HUL management approach in China. Primarily, the approach proceeds from a dynamic city which underwent, and thus continues to undergo, socio-economic changes. This is particularly suitable for China because many cities are subject to rapid urbanization processes and related transformations. Another strength of this approach is that the adaptation of urban heritage to social needs is seen as an opportunity. As has been shown in the case studies, historical buildings often lack sanitation facilities and other basic amenities. In order to enable its residents better living conditions, they often must be adapted to modern needs.

The HUL approach regards urban centers from the landscape perspective and as part of an historical continuum. As a result of a historic layering process, the different physical layers of the city are equally significant. From the investigated case studies, only Tianzifang preserved all physical layers from traditional dwelling houses to industrial heritage of different historical periods. In the Pingjiang Historic Block and Tongli, industrial buildings were demolished or transformed so as to resonate with the historic townscape. While Tongli's conservation plan explicitly refers to physical and intangible layers, industrial heritage is not included.

These results show that industrial heritage is still considered inferior to architecture from earlier historical periods as well as the attempt to create a uniform image of a place. The acceptance of industrial heritage is highest in Shanghai where adaptive reuse of formerly industrial architecture for cultural purposes started in the late 1990s. This is not surprising due to the city's high amount of

Conclusion

modern architecture and fast reaction to global trends. In contrast, the Pingjiang Historic Block and Tongli emphasize the great amount of preserved architecture from the imperial and Republican period as part of their cultural tourism strategies. Here, the landscape perspective of HUL could foster an understanding of equally significant layers from different historical periods.

Due to the interrelatedness of Chinese architecture with its environment and rich intangible heritage, the concept of the Historic Urban Landscape can further contribute to preserve these “invisible” layers of cultural heritage. In Tongli, such intangible layers have been included in the conservation plan but are mainly preserved as part of touristic activities. In the Pingjiang Historic Block, tangible sites are also used by the local community, e.g. for *kunqu* opera and *pingtan* performances and practice. Another “invisible” layer comprises living habits of local people. While the residential function has been integrated into development in all three cases, comparatively little is done to strengthen this function. Most treated buildings in both cases did not continue their residential function (see appendix A.12–A.16) and only in the case of the Huancui Villa in Tongli was heritage integrated into a residential complex.

In terms of tools, the implementation of the HUL Recommendation in Tongli has mainly been focused on the areas of knowledge and planning. This is shown by the research cooperation with the National Research Council of Italy which aimed at the identification and a better understanding of interconnections between the city and its natural setting. In the Pingjiang Historic Block, interviews were conducted with local residents during the planning process in order to inform upon the intangible layers of cultural heritage in the block.⁵ These examples show that there is an openness concerning the introduction of new methodology in these domains.

Another aspect which has been successfully employed in the cases are funding strategies such as public-private partnerships. One example from Tongli is Lize Girls’ School where the Blossom Hill Inn Group is allowed to use buildings as part of their boutique hotel profile while taking on responsibility for their conservation. Moreover, there have been many cooperations established with museums in cases where exhibitions are staged in former mansions such as the Number One Scholar Museum in the Pingjiang Historic District. The engagement of the private sector in conservation is important for Chinese cities since the responsibility to raise funding for urban development has been transferred to local governments.

Concerning civic engagement tools, this study has found that community participation mainly remained limited to research activities and economic participation rather than active involvement in decision-making processes. Because conservation usually follows a government-led approach, local governments often see

5 Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, p. 108.

their roles as guiding conservation and offering opportunities for local residents to participate in this development. By carrying out improvement of respective residential areas and providing the necessary infrastructure, residents are enabled to participate in development, for example, by opening guesthouses, restaurants as well as shops or providing services. While in the case of Tongli, tourism development offered employment and enabled, particularly younger people, to stay in the town; those residents in Tianzifang with ground-floor apartments equally improved their financial situations by becoming de-facto landlords. As HUL is not a restrictive approach but accepts changes of the urban environment as well as local knowledge and traditions, it provides a great range of opportunities to integrate the rapid development taking place in Chinese cities with conservation measures even further and thereby protect their rich and manifold cultural heritage.

